

Purpose, Method, and Policy of this Work

Part 4 of 15

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We proceed now to the consideration of the eighth postulate. This runs this way: assistance may be given to the evolving entity. To introduce the discussion here, I shall introduce into the tape two quotations, one, the third fundamental of *The Secret Doctrine*, and, second, a quotation from a certain footnote in *The Voice of the Silence*. The third fundamental from *The Secret Doctrine* is as follows:

The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage [of] for every Soul—a spark of the former—through the Cycle of Incarnation, or Necessity, in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic Law, during the whole term. In other words, no purely spiritual Buddhi (Divine Soul) can have an independent conscious existence before the spark which issued from the pure Essence of the Universal Sixth Principle—or the OVER-SOUL—has (a) passed through every elemental form of the phenomenal world of that Manvantara, and (b) acquired individuality, first by natural impulse, and then by self-induced and self-devised efforts, checked by its Karma, thus ascending through all the degrees of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest Manas, from mineral and plant, up to the holiest Archangel (Dhyani Buddha). The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric Philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man, save those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations.¹

What is strongly suggested here is that attainment is achievement by ones own effort, by the means which he devises himself, that it is not handed out to anyone upon a platter. It implies that the all desirable goal is mastery, not a limp passivity in which one receives, hopefully, a benediction. There are those who orient to the idea of being a babe in the arms of God and a sort of perpetual bambino. That is not the spirit of this message at all. There is the principle of surrender that has its place, to be sure, but that is really surrender to the “monad,” which one truly is; it is not a surrender to something supposed to be an extracosmic God. The message is reinforced by a certain quotation from *The Mahatma Letters* which runs this way: “All the powers of nature lie before you; *take what you can.*”² No, one does not achieve by weakness. One does not arrive at the goal by being limp.

¹ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophy Company, 1893), 45.

² A. T. Barker, ed., *The Mahatma Letters* (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1923), 65: “There are the powers of all nature before you; *take what you can.*”

Now, if it is objected that the sense of self-effort as being that which makes the goal a possible achievement, that this would awaken in one a monstrous egotism. There is some danger of a sense that this I have been able to achieve, to be sure; but, it is easily modified by consideration of the heights not yet attained and focusing more upon them than upon the height which has been attained. And furthermore, strength is the important thing; and if it does involve a problem of an improper egoism, there are means by which that can be handled. But for the saving of this world, that will not be done by babes resting in the arms of a supposed extracosmic God, but only by those who are strong enough to take up their portion of the burden and lift it. I can quote the words of Christ on this subject, "I would that ye were hot or cold, but in as much as ye are lukewarm, I spue thee out of my mouth."³ He preferred a vigorous enemy to weaklings that were of little value.

However, though the pilgrim is responsible for the effort and the devising of the means by which he climbs to the mountain top, yet when he arrives there, he finds a magnificent response from the other side. The wealth which he has won showers upon him beyond his highest expectations. But while this quotation gives the impression that aid cannot be given, there is another quotation from *The Voice of the Silence* that shows that this is not the whole of the story. I shall read this quotation into the tape. It is footnote number 34 in *The Voice of the Silence*.

This footnote is given in connection with the following quotation from the Seven Portals:

Yea; on the Arya Path thou art no more Srotapatti, thou art a Bodhisattva.
The stream is cross'd. 'Tis true thou hast a right to Dharmakaya vesture;
but Sambogakaya is greater than a Nirvaneer, and greater still is a
Nirmanakaya—the Buddha of Compassion.⁴

The footnote is as follows:

This same popular reverence calls "Buddhas of Compassion" those Bodhisattvas who, having reached the rank of an Arhat (*i.e.*, have completed the *fourth* or *seventh* Path), refuse to pass into the Nirvanic state or "don the *Dharmakaya* robe and cross to the other shore," as it would then become beyond their power to assist men even so little as Karma permits. They prefer to remain invisibly (in Spirit, so to speak) in the world and contribute toward man's salvation by influencing them to follow the Good Law, *i.e.*, lead them on the Path of Righteousness. It is part of the exoteric Northern Buddhism to honor all such great characters as Saints, and to offer even prayers to them, as the Greeks and Catholics

³ Bible, King James Version (Cambridge Edition), Revelation 3: 15-16:

I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

⁴ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Pasadena, Calif.: Theosophical University Press, 1946), 70-71.

do to their Saints and Patrons; on the other hand, the Esoteric teachings countenance no such thing.⁵

What is implied here is that assistance can be given within the limits allowed by *karma*. While one puts forth the effort and climbs and may, perhaps, when exhausted sink down to the ground, yet, then a voice may be heard that will bring to him the courage that he needs to continue. But he must put forth the effort himself. The work is not done by others. The instruction may be given by others, foretastes in the form of what we call *inductions* may be given, but the achieving of the goal where one becomes either a *Nirvanee* or a *Bodhisattva* who has renounced the Great Reward, that is the result of self-effort. Let it be remembered, however, that weakness does not win the Kingdom of Heaven, that limpness is no way by which one may attain the goal. The noble end of man is to become a master and then a co-worker with nature.

Let us enter now upon the consideration of the ninth postulate. This is in the form: ultimate death or annihilation is an impossibility. There is a tendency upon the part of many to think of the cessation of life in the physical body, in the organized sense that define a human being as an outer manifestation, is a termination. Now, let us consider something very basic. We know today that if two particles of matter such as an electron and a positron come into contact, they destroy each other as a form of ponderable matter; but, it does not result in a condition of nothing at all. What results is a flash of radiation, a state of existence terminated but not the essence that existed. It takes a different form. Something remains permanent throughout this transformation. The name for it, as I understand it from the theoretical physicists, is *energy-momentum*. That remains invariant, but the form of its manifestation has been radically changed. This, I think, gives us the real meaning of what we call death. It is transformation, not essential termination. To be sure, it does involve a termination of a state or form leading to some other transformed condition.

Most of us are quite unable to determine what happens to the essential entity when physical death occurs, but there is evidence from certain testimonies of individuals who have departed from the body, because of some condition such as loss of blood and so forth, and who when their body has been properly handled they have come back and reported an experience. This falls within the zone of our empiric determination without having broken forth certain powers that belong to the field of yoga. There seems to be a unanimity on certain points with respect to the state in which the individuals found themselves when they departed from body consciousness into some inner state. Two features seem to be universal: that they find themselves in space, that is, not resting upon some surface such as the ground of the earth, but just resting in space itself; and secondly, so far as the reports that are known to me are concerned, they find themselves in a supremely delightful state, so much so that in many if not most instances, when they are drawn back, as by medical aid, they resent it very much. They do not wish to return.

What is implied here is that there is a continuation of consciousness, that the quality of consciousness is different, but still it continues. The only real death would be an ultimate termination of consciousness. Dropping a body has essentially the meaning of

⁵ Ibid., 95.

throwing off a cloak. Consciousness continuing is the essentiality, and that remains though it is very different in form. But there are deeper philosophic questions involved here. The very idea of something becoming nothing at all, in the complete sense of the word, is essentially unthinkable—transformation, yes; annihilation, no.

As to whether the initial experience after death is always one of a superior delight, may be questioned. All of the instances that have come to my attention have not involved any single case of an individual of monumental evil. There is here a very real probability that the after death experience would be anything but delightful. There is a reference to the assassin who was responsible for the death of President Garfield to be found in *The Mahatma Letters*, and it was there stated that he went through the following experience repeatedly in the after-death state: he would repeat the act of the assassination, the experience of attempted escape and capture, of trial, and of execution, over and over again for an enormous period of time. That would hardly be a delightful experience.

A suggestion of the meaning of death may be found in considering the relationship between the caterpillar and the butterfly or moth. The caterpillar lives a life crawling upon surfaces until it reaches a stage of critical completeness. Then it dies as a caterpillar, becoming a chrysalis, something inanimate that seems not to be alive, yet, in some subtle way still is, for a process of transformation is going on which ultimately leads to the emergence of a butterfly or moth. This probably suggests better than any other figure what the real meaning of death is. It is transformation into another way of consciousness. It is not annihilation.

This would seem to be an appropriate time to give a larger consideration to that which is involved by the event which men call death. By death, in our simplest understanding of the term, we mean an event when a body which has been animate, and has given evidence of consciousness, and has communicated with us in various ways, suddenly ceases to be animate and ceases to give evidence of consciousness that can be communicated to us. It is an event that, so far as the knowledge of mankind goes, comes to every living creature, to all plants, or other representatives of the vegetable kingdom, to all animals, and to all human beings, and even to the rocks themselves, for one can note a very important difference between the live rocks of the Sierra Nevada mountains, which are near to where we are, and the dead rocks that are falling apart in the Alabamas, which are also near to us. Of the one we may say they are alive, firm, and adhering crystal to crystal, closely, while in the other case, the crystals are falling apart and disintegrating. And furthermore, in the large sense of the lives of stars, we have the story of their birth, as it has been observed by our astronomers, their growth to maturity, their cycle of full life, their decay, and finally their death as nuclear suns, which radiate no more light. It is a universal principle, therefore.

Now, there is one approach which I find very helpful to consideration of the meaning of death, and that is the abandonment of the popular view that death is the opposite of life. On the contrary, it is the opposite of birth, and birth and death are two modes of living phenomena. This, I think, gives the key to its essential meaning.

To be sure, most of us are unable to trace what happens beyond the event of the fall of a human body, but there is in certain literature presented to us a scheme of the processes, and variants of the processes, which take place beyond the event of physical

death. One may ask is there any reason to believe that records such as those given in the Theosophic eschatology, or *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, or *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, and similar works that were produced in the Middle Ages, is there any reason to regard this as more than imaginative? There is for this reason, that it is stated that among the powers latent in man which have been broken out and mastered, so it is said, by certain individuals who, through yoga, have become more or less adept, and that by this power, tracing of the events is possible. I can contribute this much in confirmation: that I know from experience by a conscious effort put forth that it is possible to superimpose one's own consciousness upon the consciousness of another entity. I've known it as a superposition upon my own consciousness, as well as an effort put forth myself to learn something about the consciousness of another entity. This could be a way, not necessarily the only way, but a way by which one could trace what happens when a given entity passes through the transformation which we call death. This point is important, for a statement which simply stands as an arbitrary statement which we read but cannot verify, does not afford a sure ground of security. I would say that I can see how in principle it is possible for the tracing of the processes beyond death can be achieved.

The literature with which I am familiar which deals with the subject of death and states after death consists of three sources: first, the eschatology to be found in Theosophical literature—some of it in *The Mahatma Letters*, some of it in *The Secret Doctrine*, and elsewhere; second, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*; and third, a more or less obscure essay to be found somewhere in the first six volumes of *The Theosophist* called "The 'Elixir of Life'."⁶ This latter is very interesting in that it purports to outline a way by which death in the ordinary sense can be transcended, believe it or not. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of these sources, but there is adequate reason to take the material very seriously, and I've also suggested how it might be possible for a qualified individual to trace and investigate the process.

In the Theosophical eschatology, death essentially is not the physical event, but an event that occurs after the physical event. What we know here and observe is the physical event only, but it is there asserted, and it is not too difficult to verify, that man is an entity of more than one sheath, that the gross physical body is only the outermost sheath, and that there is an inner sheath which measures the real life-cycle of the individual. The outermost body, or the physical entity, may die, and yet the life-cycle continue until there is a second death of the inner sheath. It is predicated that the individual, by reason of his *karma*, is born with a certain life-cycle potential. He may live this potential, or he may fail to live it by reason of accidents, like falling from a cliff, like being accidentally shot on a hunting trip, like death in war, like death from a disease which was not *karmically* ordained. In that case, he has not lived out his *karmic* cycle as he should have and he finds himself in an inner state which we may call an intermediate zone, which is not either a heaven world or a hell world, but a zone that has been called *kamaloka*. In *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the name for this zone appears to be the *bardo*.

⁶ G. M. (Godolphin Mitford?), "The 'Elixir of Life'," parts 1 and 2, *The Theosophist* 3, no. 6 (March 1882): 140-142 and no. 7 (April 1882): 168-171.

Now, in the reports that have come to us from individuals who went part way through the dying process and were called back, or even by their own volition came back, there seems to be a zone that is very close to this earth. In *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, it is stated that the individual who has dropped his body may in this stage be aware of the environment he was in while living and of his friends, may see his friends dealing with the objects that were his, and so forth. This implies that there is a sensuous capacity that for a time, at least, can be aware of the objective plane which has been left. But as we do not have the physical senses, in this case, it suggests that the power of observation belongs to a subtle correspondence of the physical senses, and that what he sees is a subtle correspondent of the material objects, rather than seeing the material objects themselves. In other words, he sees replicas of the material objects rather than the gross material objects themselves; thus implying that matter has a subtle side, and it is so said in the literature. These returns that are more or less to be found in our literature would seem to be less than the full experience of death, merely the phase of dropping correlation with the gross physical body, but still in the more subtle aspect of those gross physical objects. All the evidence is that a deeper penetration into the after-death zones breaks the correlation with outer events.

The form of death designed by nature is death from old age. In this case, the life has lived the full *karmic* cycle designed for it and the potential period of lingering before the death of the inner sheath takes place would be minimal—perhaps no interval at all. But if the death has been premature, as by accident, there may be a considerable period before the second, inner death takes place. It is stated, and there is reason to believe this, that in some cases where the cycle before the inner death takes place would be long, because there was an early death by accident or by being killed in war, there may be an immediate reincarnation with the same inner vehicle so that there would be two lives with one inner vehicle, which would essentially mean one life in two parts. But in the normal case, there appears to be an interlude of not very much positive value before the second death takes place; and it is stated that the process of this second death involves something like the separation of the sheep from the goats; in other words, a removal of the shadowy side of the individual, the trivial parts of his life, like the processes of eating and dressing and so forth, not associated with any permanent value—that these things are separated from that portion of his consciousness that has more persistent and permanent value, which is taken up by the inner man after his passing through the second death. It is then said he enters a zone which is called *Devachan*, where he reaps the fruits of the seeds sown in his just preceding life. He may spend a long time developing the possibilities of that seed, maybe even thousands of years if his harvest is rich; that this is a uniformly happy life; that he has with him all of his friends, all of the associations which he has valued. But there is strong evidence that these are not the actual reality of his friends and his various associates, but a projection of them done unconsciously by himself. In other words, he is not living in terms of objective discrimination. He is not really meeting the reality of his apparent associates, but his understanding of them which he has projected. This is a fact, or at least the representation of a fact, that makes one wonder whether *devachanic* interlude is the most desirable state to be in. It is represented as unquestionably a happy state, and even though long in terms of objective time, would never seem long because in a state of bliss there is no such thing as a sense of time dragging. Nonetheless, one might wish to be more aware of the true reality of things.

After the completion of the assimilation of the values contained within the seeds planted in the preceding life, there comes what is equivalent to a death with respect to the interlude of the heaven world of *Devachan*. At this point his ego has completed its cycle and is withdrawn, and he's pulled back into incarnation by a new birth where he is no longer the John Smith of the previous incarnation, but the Tom Jones or the Sarah Moore of a new incarnation with a new ego center. And as a rule, though not invariably, what would be continued here would not be the same keynote that marked the preceding life, but other aspects contained in the monad, which is truly he, and which were not represented in the experience of the preceding life. This is a rough sketch of the general picture. There are other variants. There is the experience of the individual of monumental evil, which is very different indeed; and then there is the experience of those who are beginning to develop something of greater power.

Another point needs to be brought in here. Every individual is said to have an *astral*, or *Linga Sharira*, which is that which was disintegrated in the second death. But he who has entered upon the path which leads ultimately to the Fundamental Realization is said to build a permanent *astral*, since this path typically requires more than one incarnation. The literature says usually it requires seven incarnations.⁷ But he builds, in this case, a permanent *astral* which persists throughout the seven incarnations. One who is in this stage of development may reach a point where he foregoes the *devachanic* interlude and is able to take an immediate incarnation. In a certain sense, with a permanent *astral*, the seven or so incarnations may be regarded as one life-cycle in which he drops seven gross physical bodies, but retains the same inner vehicle. In this case, he may take immediate incarnation and continue on the job, as it were. But there are other possibilities. He may be enabled to achieve a conscious life in something that has been called the "subtle world" in which he stands in correlation with the objective order and may act upon it or influence it.

Here it becomes necessary for us to consider the deeper meaning of death. What we have considered so far is death in the sense of the dropping of the physical body, or from the outer standpoint, the perceiving of a physical body losing what we call its life. In *The Mahatma Letters*, it is stated again and again that the ordinary individual, namely, one who is neither an adept nor a sorcerer, does not know that he is dead when this event has taken place, but he moves on without that kind of knowledge. I've been able to check this in a certain sense. It has been said that the simple act of going to sleep is the little death, that in fact going to sleep is a partial experience of what is involved in death in the larger sense. Now, if one studies his dream consciousness during sleep, as I have, he may find this, that in that consciousness he has no knowledge of the fact that he had lived a life in the waking state out here in the gross physical. He seems to live in his dream quite apart from any knowledge of that outer life. In other words, when dreaming he does not know that it is a dream; he does not know that he has any other existence. This, all of us can observe by a study of his

⁷ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 69:

Calm and unmoved the Pilgrim glideth up the stream that to Nirvana leads. He knoweth that the more his feet will bleed, the whiter will himself be washed. He knoweth well that after seven short and fleeting births Nirvana will be his....

dream consciousness, and it serves as a partial verification of the statement in *The Mahatma Letters* that the ordinary person does not know that he is dead.⁸

What would be the condition of knowing that one had passed from embodied life in the outer physical to an inner kind of life? This we can derive by an analysis of the essentialities of waking consciousness and that of dream consciousness. Essential to waking consciousness is the presence of discernment, judgment, discrimination, reason, and memory. If one carries all of this with him when he goes through the transition which is commonly called death, he has not died in the essential sense. He still is carrying with him the essential qualities of his waking consciousness. He has memory of that which happened during his lifetime; he can judge events; he can discriminate; he can reason—characteristics that are not found in the dream state properly. And here also we must note a certain point: not all experiences during sleep are dream. Sri Aurobindo has pointed this out at some length, and I am familiar with this fact: that it is possible to have a truly awakened kind of consciousness while sleeping. In other words, one can pass through the awareness of a real event, in the waking sense of the word, even though sleeping. When such is the case, discernment, judgment, and discrimination are there, and there can be a tie in with events belonging to the waking state that is not true of the authentic dream.

If an individual has been able to carry objective discernment and judgment, with memory of his past life in a body, back into this inner state, then it is possible for him, though this calls for supreme effort, to achieve a life in a kind of zone where, though he has no gross physical body, he still continues the consciousness that had been in his former physical body, and may deal with world problems. He may achieve correlation with world problems by *tulku* correlation with those who stand as *chelas* with respect to himself so that through their instrumentality, he can communicate, can give directions, and so forth. This, however, is a power that belongs to adepts, and the door to adeptship is through basic yogic Realization. It is one of the higher possibilities. It is not available to everybody, but only to those who have first broken through out the door of Fundamental Realization. This deals with the possibilities presented through the Theosophical eschatology. A somewhat different picture is presented by *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and we shall enter into a consideration of that portrait at this time.

Since last dictating into the tape, yesterday, certain thoughts have come to me not related to the subject matter we have been discussing. So I shall introduce them as another parenthesis so that they may not be lost. In fact, I have decided to somewhat release the principle of systematic presentation and to give material as it comes spontaneously, although that does sacrifice the principle of orderly presentation. The thoughts that came to me are as follows:

I am a center dedicated to the protection and promulgation of the *dharma*, as I understand the *dharma*. Such Light as may come from this center is not sealed from any creature, human or other, who may seek it. However, no creature, human or other, is under any compulsion to orient to this center. No creature, human or other, has any obligation, tasks, or dues imposed upon him save those which he imposes upon himself

⁸ Barker, *The Mahatma Letters*, 124-125.

with respect to this center. This center is oriented to the *Atman*, and not to any collectivity or society.

End of the parenthesis.